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Massachusetts Agricultural Marketing Projects Awarded Over \$95,000

*Federal Grants to Test Market for Safety-Certified Bagged Salad Greens,
Adjust Nursery Products to Consumer Preferences*

BOSTON – Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles today announced that two Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) programs recently received a boost from more than \$95,000 in federal money aimed at expanding markets for the Commonwealth's agricultural industry.

"These two projects are examples of the Commonwealth's efforts to improve economic opportunities for farmers," Acting DAR Commissioner Scott Soares said. "The additional funding provided by the USDA enhances our ability to help the Massachusetts agricultural community expand its markets and stay competitive in a global economy."

The Massachusetts programs are among 26 initiatives in 21 states sharing \$1.3 million in U.S. Department of Food and Agriculture (USDA) matching grants for agricultural market research and demonstration projects. Provided under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program, the grants are designed to help states explore new approaches to marketing U.S. food and agricultural products, and to improve the efficiency and performance of marketing systems.

In cooperation with the Massachusetts Nursery and Landscaping Association, DAR received \$61,600 to develop a marketing strategy that enables nursery operators to respond to changing consumer preferences and shifts in demand. The grant will also help fund development of regulations governing water use and invasive plants.

With a separate \$33,825 grant awarded through DAR, Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture of South Deerfield and other partners will work to determine the regional demand for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)-certified bagged salad greens. HACCP is a systematic, preventive approach to food safety that addresses physical, chemical and biological hazards at all stages of food production and preparation, rather than relying on inspection of finished products. This certification is now required by many industry food buyers for highly perishable products.

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The USDA grant – which complements a previous award from the Commonwealth’s Agriculture Innovation Center for development of a salad greens HACCP plan - will also help DAR and its partners assess the capability of local growers to supply a potential market for HACCP-certified greens.

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